

**A Place of their Own:  
Graphic Design Degrees and the Search for Distinction  
in Protestant Evangelical Higher Education**

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## Abstract

This study investigates graphic design undergraduate education in Protestant evangelical colleges and universities in Australia and the USA. It explores the complex means by which these institutions seek to maintain their distinctive religious identities while offering the kinds of programs that are not much different from those offered in mainstream secular universities. It asks why Protestant evangelical colleges and universities would run graphic design courses, how they undertake the task of educating the graphic designer, and what they do in offering graphic design courses that is different. In doing so, it investigates the changing status of Protestant evangelical universities and colleges, as they increasingly measure their view of excellence and their own academic goals against those of secular higher educational systems.

In investigating *why* graphic design courses are offered in Protestant evangelical institutions, this study draws upon available literature in the field, and upon post-structural sociological theory, particularly that of Bourdieu. In asking *how* such courses are run, the study uses as an exemplar, four educational institutions that run such a course, based on a research investigation of three institutions in the USA and one in Australia. This research study is also employed, along with sociological theory and relevant literature, in the investigation of *what* these institutions do differently in offering graphic design courses.

The study argues that Protestant evangelical higher educational institutions can successfully offer degree courses such as graphic design whilst maintaining their distinctive religious emphases. It recognizes the importance of a shared platform of beliefs, the values of evangelicalism, and the significance of a non-denominational stance as vital factors in this undertaking. It also highlights the ability to express one's faith openly as a practice that contributes to religious identity. However, the idea of the integration of faith and learning as a widely promoted claim of many Protestant evangelical institutions cannot be substantiated with reference to graphic design courses. The real differentiating factor of these institutions is seen to lie in their ability to provide Christian education involving varied experiences that, by their number and kind, give a sense of a Protestant evangelical worldview.

## **Certificate of Authorship/Originality**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and flourishes, likely representing the author's name.

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